IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appl. No.:	10,594,777	§ Confirmation No.:	7103
Applicant:	Matthew Trevor Snowdon	§	
Filing Date:	10/04/2007	§	
TC/A.U.:	3672	§	
Examiner:	Andrish, Sean D.	§	
Title:	*Method and Apparatus for Laying Elongate Articles*	§	
Docket No.:	Acergy-57	§	

RESPONSE

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Applicant notes with appreciation withdrawal of the anticipation rejection based on Willis (5,075,802).

Claims 1-9, 11-13 and 15-22 stand rejected as obvious over Willis in view of Martin, et al. (5,971,666). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner recognizes that Willis fails to disclose an apparatus in the second mode receiving flexible elongate product from the tensioner along the axis and diverting it to a more vertical angle. In relying on the Martin reference to cure the infirmity of Willis, the Examiner's position is basically to combine the pipe diverter of Martin so as to plastically bend a pipeline from a substantially horizontal orientation to a desired launch angle. Applicant respectfully submits

that by modifying Willis with the structure disclosed in Martin, the Willis structure would essentially be rendered inoperable vis-à-vis providing a stable vessel for use in carrying out the Willis invention.

By way of background, the terms "rigid pipe" and "flexible pipe" are terms of art in pipe laying and, as disclosed in Applicant's specification at p. 1, ll. 8-24, the Willis patent is directed to a system for laying "rigid pipe." Obviously, rigid pipe has some degree of flexibility allowing it to be bent in the manner indicated in the Willis specification. However, it is generally constructed either on site from segments (as in Willis) or stored on wheels of extremely large diameter, as disclosed in U.S. Patent 4,917,540 and discussed at p. 1, l. 11 of Applicant's specification. Accordingly, the variation in ramp angle in Willis is for the purpose of adapting the launch angle of the pipeline to the water depth, as taught by Willis in col. 5, ll. 60-64.

Martin is directed to the laying of large diameter pipelines, as taught in col. 1, ll. 40-43. In this regard, Martin, as taught in col. 9, ll. 22-26 and as shown in Fig. 8 requires the use of a large diameter (approximately 60 meters) wheel 104. Understandably, the wheel diverter 104 of Martin is necessarily extremely heavy. Accordingly, to use the pipeline diverter 104 of Martin in the apparatus of Willis, would create stability problem for the vessel, given the fact that the Willis apparatus is already a bulky and heavy structure comprised of a tiltable ramp with a straightener, tensioner and clamps. Accordingly, for all intents and purposes, the Willis pipe laying vessel, modified per Martin, would be rendered inoperative because of its instability.

Martin, like Willis, is directed to the laying of rigid pipe. Nothing in either of those references suggests adaptation for flexible pipe. While a smaller diverter may be used for flexible pipe, which can obviously be bent to a smaller radius without yielding the pipe, there would still not be achieved a viable vessel design. Laying the start and end parts of a flexible pipe requires the use of cranes. The Examiner's proposed combination of Martin and Willis for laying flexible pipe would require the use of an over-sized crane in the same region of the vessel as the tiltable ramp and the diverter, which would further compromise the stability of the vessel.

It is also respectfully submitted that the Examiner's proposed combination based on Willis and Martin is merely conclusionary in nature. In particular, the Examiner has not employed any of the rationales used by the Patent Office in the wake of *KSR*. Indeed, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner has failed to clearly articulate why it would be obvious to combine Martin with Willis.

In view of the foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all claims are in condition for allowance which is hereby earnestly solicited and respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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